

UPDATE

CDC Recommends Meningococcal Vaccine for Adolescents and College Freshmen

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now recommends routine vaccination of children 11-12 years old, previously unvaccinated adolescents at high school entry and college freshmen living in dormitories with the newly licensed meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4). The new recommendation is designed to help achieve vaccination among those at highest risk for meningococcal disease. As the vaccine supply increases, CDC hopes, within three years, to recommend routine vaccination for all adolescents beginning at 11 years of age.

CDC recommends routine meningococcal vaccination for young adolescents at the pre-adolescent doctor visit at about age 11-12, and for those who have not previously been vaccinated, before entering high school at about age 15. CDC also recommends that college freshmen living in dormitories be immunized to reduce disease risk. College freshmen living in the close quarters of dormitories are at a higher risk for meningococcal disease compared with peers the same age who are not attending college. Also, all other adolescents who wish to reduce their risk of disease may elect to receive vaccine.

Meningococcal disease strikes up to 3,000 Americans, killing 300 people every year. Ten to 12 percent of people with meningococcal disease die, and among survivors, up to 15 percent may suffer long-term permanent disabilities including hearing loss, limb amputation or brain damage. The disease often begins with symptoms that can be mistaken for common illnesses, such as the flu. However, meningococcal disease is particularly dangerous because it progresses rapidly and can kill within hours.

This new vaccine is a single shot and should offer longer protection than previous vaccines. The most common reaction from the shot is a sore arm. However, it does not protect people against meningococcal disease caused by serogroup B bacteria. This serogroup of bacteria causes one-third of meningococcal cases in the United States. More than half of the cases among infants under the age of 1 year are caused by type B, for which no vaccine is licensed or available in the United States.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) licensed the new meningococcal vaccine on January 14, 2005 for use in people 11-55 years of age. It is manufactured by Sanofi Pasteur and is marketed as Menactra.

For additional information on meningococcal disease visit
http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal_g.htm

